

COVENANT MAKING IN GENESIS 15:9-18 IN THE CONTEXT OF ARCHEOLOGY AND YORUBA WORLD VIEW

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ABSTRACT

Covenant making is a common phenomenon in the Ancient Near East especially in the Fertile Crescent where archaeological discoveries had shed light on the way of life of the people living in this area (Muhlenberg 296). In Yoruba and Jewish traditional customs, covenant making is a phenomenon that cannot be toyed with or waved aside as it has become a common practice among the people. Archaeological discoveries have confirmed that covenant making is a part of the tradition of the people of the Ancient Near East. Some of the tablets discovered in Mari, Nuzi, Amarna and Ugarit confirmed this fact during the patriarchal period. In the same way, covenant making or practices are not strange to the Africans; there is no tribe that does not engage in one form of covenant making or the other through ritual practices or blood sacrifice. In Yoruba tradition and legend, covenant making is a common practice among the traditional worshippers. There are cases of covenant making between two or more communities, friends; and more importantly between the people and the deity and any violation of this covenant will bring serious repercussion on the violator. This paper is a comparative study. The writer using intercultural hermeneutics that utilizes historical-critical and exegetical method as his tool for comparison discovers that through archeological discoveries, covenant making in Genesis 15:9-18 is similar to covenant making in Yoruba culture.

KEYWORDS: *Covenant terminology, Archaeology and world view*

INTRODUCTION

The word *covenant* comes from the Hebrew word *b^erit* meaning league or confederacy (Vine 2000: 50). The word is most probably derived from Akkadian root *beritu* meaning “to fetter” and can be used as direct object of a number of verbs to designate the establishment or breach of covenant (Mendenhall 714). The word also has parallels in Hittite, Egyptian, Assyrian and Aramaic languages. The word *b^erit* occurs over 280 times in the Old Testament. The first occurrence of the word according to Vine is found in Gen 6:18. (Vine 2000:50). The word *covenant* is also translated to mean *alliance, agreement or treaty* (Mendenhall 1962:714). The verbs that is used in connection with *b^erit* is *kārāt* literally meaning “to cut” therefore *kārāt b^erit* means “to cut a covenant” which points to the ancient rite of cutting animal with the forming of a treaty or covenant (Fensham 1992: 240). When the verb *kārāt* is used with the preposition *l^e* or *‘im*, it points to the direction of a covenant contracted by a superior.

In addition various verbs are used to denote the participation of the people in the covenant e.g. *bó* “to come into covenant relationship with the Lord” (2Chro. 15:2) *ābar* “to enter into such a relationship” (Deut. 29:12). Two verbs are used for keeping the covenant e.g. *nāšar* and “*šāmara*.” Fensham noted that a whole cluster of verbs are used for breaking the covenant, in the first place *lō* with *nāšar* and “*šāmara*,” then for example *šākah* “to forget” *ābar* “to transgress” *mā’as* “to despise” *pārar* “to break” *šāqar* “to be false to” *hillēl* “to profane” and *šāhat* “to corrupt” (241).

The new covenant version is *diatheke* which refers “to the act or rite of the making of a covenant” and also to the standing contract between two partners (Albright). From the above

explanation, covenant making therefore, is a solemn promise or binding agreement made between two parties of different socio-political status in which case the covenant creates a relationship between them regulated by the terms of the covenant. The terms of the covenant may be verbal or a symbol or a sign or token seal with a meal, water or blood. (Mendenhall 1962:715).

Therefore, covenant making is a serious issue in the ancient world once one enters into it, it is binding, it cannot be broken and if one breaks it will lead to serious consequence. The consequence of breaking covenant is grievous with attending serious repercussion to the defaulting partner, whether a group or nation or individual. Usually breaking of covenant brings in curses or serious affliction upon the covenant breaker.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Archeology is the study of ancient remains such as artifacts, relics, pottery that aids in the understanding of the ancient culture, civilization and politico-social structure. It is the principal means of recovering the past by discovering of ancient sites and excavation findings that are studied and evaluated. It supplies important data for political, economical, social and cultural history (Dever 1976:195).

There are different branches of Archeology of which Biblical Archaeology is a branch that is limited to the bible lands. It is a science that seeks to unravel the story of past ages by digging up their material remains. It also has the added interest that through this study one is better able to understand and interpret the textbook of the Christian faith (Thompson 1969: 3).

WORLDVIEW

World view in this paper is defined as the way the people perceived the world around them. World view explains the belief and practices of the people within their cultural context

CONTEXTUAL LOCATION OF GENESIS 15:9-18

Genesis 15 begins with *rx:aa*; a particle adverb that can be expressed as adverb of time. In this chapter *rx:aa*; is rendered “after these things” which seems to describe the conclusion of the scene in chapter 14 which contradicts the liberal view that does not see the connection between the preceding chapter 14 and chapter 15.

Chapter 14 is a narration of the victory of Abram over the coalition of two kings that took his nephew Lot captive. The chapter 14 ends with the appearing of a strange biblical figure Melchizedek who seems to have pronounced divine word unto Abram. After this event Abram had a vision in Gen 15:1 where the word of the Lord came to him in a vision saying

“Abram, Fear not, I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward.” After the rescue of Lot from captivity, God revealed himself to Abram as his Self- Existing his Shield and his Exceeding Great Reward. The event in Gen. 15:1 has often led scholars to associate the material of Gen 15:1-7 with the E source through the divine name *Yahweh* that is used (Westerman 1995: 209). Some scholars placed Gen 15 before Gen 12 because they saw it as the beginning of the covenantal relationship between God and Abram, they posit that this covenant is a unilateral one in which God himself was the initiator of the covenant with Abram (Williamson 139).

Scholars like J. Wellhausen, G. Vonrad and E. Erlich believed that there were two independent texts in this chapter 15:1-6 and 7-21 which they divided into two different narratives as Westerman noted “we are really dealing with two narratives whose materials has had different histories” (1995: 209). Westerman citing E. Erlich posits that a new narrative begins in vs 7 and citing Zimmerli said one will fully grasp the meaning of vv1-6 and v7ff only when one understands each passage as an originally self contained account (1995:209). The whole passage of chapter 15 is one unit which flows from the beginning to the end. There is no need to divide these passages into two sections; the whole passage can be treated as one unit because it flows. After the end of one scene another episode commenced.

In Vs 2 -3 Abram protested to God for his childlessness and ask God what will he give him? He recognized the fact that if his destiny did not change Eliezer of Damascus (his slave) will inherit his whole household according to the tradition of the ancient world. Archeological discovery of the practices of adoption in the Ancient Near East shed light on this tradition. It was a common practice in the Ancient Middle East for adopted slaves to inherit their master’s property, especially, if the master has no child to inherit him after his death. Speiser noted that in Hurrian family law (which was also normative for the patriarchs) two types of heir were strongly distinguished, one was the *aplu* or direct heir and the other was *ewuru* or indirect heir, whom the law recognized when normal inheritors were lacking (Speiser 1964:112). In Abram’s case Eliezer was *ewuru* who by tradition will inherit the whole estate. Thompson observed that during the patriarchal period inheritance was one of major importance. Property was theoretically, at least, inalienable and could not pass from the family. In order to overcome this difficulties a fictitious system of adoption was used, by this device it is possible for a man to adopt any number of sons or brothers and then to pass over the property rights quite legally to the adopted party (Thompson1969:28). The same tradition is still being followed today in some ethnic group in Africa (Mbiti 1969:37; Abe 1989; 2004)

In Vs 4 the word of the Lord came to Abram reassuring him that he will have a son that will bear his name and inherit him after his departure to the great beyond. Abraham uncertainty about his future is now removed in the vision by a direct word from the Lord. There is an explicit promise of a son and the divine assurance continues in vs. 5 that Abram descendant will be so numerous that they will covered the whole earth and Abram believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Dumbrel noted that the enigma of Gen 15:6 concerns the precise meaning of the phrase which follows the belief statement namely that Yahweh reckoned it to him as righteousness (1984:16) The word “reckon” in Hebrew *h'b,îv.x.Y:w*: is a *qal* imperfect 3rd person masculine singular with 3rd person feminine singular suffix from *bv;x'* meaning “to think” “to account for” or “to reckon with” and with *vav* conjunction prefix, it means “and he reckoned” which signifies two fold meanings:

1. The meaning of reckon in a sense is to impute to somebody something when the facts or the situation is otherwise see Job 13:24; 19:11; 33:10 etc. This leaves open the possibility that the meaning in Gen 15:6 is that Abram’s faith was reckoned to him as righteousness when in fact it was not (1984:17).
2. In the second sense that which is reckoned to someone account is imputed appropriately e.g. Lev. 7:18; 17:4; Num 18:27; 2Sam 9:19. Extremely close in sense to Gen 15:6 is the case of Phineas who was zealous at stopping the ravaging plague in Num 25:6 were reckoned to

him for righteousness (1984:17) Vs 7ff begins the inauguration of the covenant. This section begins with the manifestation of God to Abraham in a manner that provides for continuity with prior promises. In both Abram expresses doubt as to the implementation of the promises both section concludes on a note of covenant affirmation (1984:17). In Vs 8 Abraham asked question which eventually led God to enter in to a covenant with him.

EXEGESIS OF SELECTED PORTION OF GENESIS 15:9-18

vL_vum. lyIa:âw> tv,L,Pvum. z[eîw> tv,L,êvum. hl'äg>[, 'yli hx'îq. wyl^aae rm,aYOæw:

.9

`lz")Agw> rtoàw>

. He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

tar;äq.li Arßt.Bi-vyai !TEiYIw: %w<T'êB; 't'ao rTEÛb;y>w: hL,ae^a-lK'-ta, Alå-xQ:)YI)w:

10

`rt")b' al{ï rPoàcih;-ta,w> Wh[e_re

10 And he brought him all these, cut them in two, and laid each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two

`~r'(b.a; ~t'Pao bVeîY:w: ~yrI+g"P.h;-l[; jyI[:ßh' dr,YEiîw: 11

11 And when birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

hk'îvex] hm²yae hNEîhiw> ~r'_b.a;-l[; hl'äp.n" hm'PDer>t;w> aAbêl' 'vm,V,'h; yhiÛy>w:
`wyl'(['tl,p,înO hl'Pdog> 12

12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram; and lo, a dread and great darkness fell upon him.

~h,êl' al{å '#r,a,'B. ^a[]r>z: hy<åh.yI ÿrgEå-yKi [d;øTe [;do'y" ~r^ab.a;l. rm,aYOæw .13
`hn")v' tAaßme [B;îr>a; ~t'_ao WNæ[iw> ~Wdßb'[]w:

13. Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years;

`lAd)G" vkuîr>Bi Waßc.yE !kEî-yrex]a;w> ykinO=a' !D"å Wdboß[]y: rv<ia] yAG^oh;-ta, ~g:ôw> 14

14. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions

`hb'(Aj hb'îyfeB. rbEßQ'Ti ~Al+v'B. ^yt,Pboa]-la, aAbiT' hT²a;w> 15

15. As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.

`hN"hE)-d[; yrIßmoa/h' !wOð[] ~le²v'-al{ yKió hN"hE+ WbWvây" y[iPybir> rAddw> 16

16. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete

vaeê dyPiäl;w> '!'v[' rWNYt; hNE"hiw> hy"+h' hj'Pl'[]w: ha'B'ê 'vm,V,'h; yhiÛy>w: rv<âa] 17

`hL,ae(h' ~yrIiz"G>h; !yBeP rb;ê['

17. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

. 'yTit;'n" ^a[]r.z:l. rmo=ale tyrIâB. ~r'Pb.a;-ta, hw"±hy> tr;óK' aWhªh; ~AYæB; 18
`tr'(P.-rh;n> ldoßG"h; rh"iN"h;-d[; ~yIr;êc.mi rh:âN>mi taZOëh; #r,a'äh'-ta

18. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

`ynI)mod>Q;h; taePw> yZIënIQ.h;-ta,w> 'ynIyQeh;-ta, 19

19. The land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites

tr;óK' is a qal imperfect 3rd masculine singular meaning to cut off or to make a covenant, this involved sacrificial process.

tyrIâBi. is a noun feminine singular which means a covenant or a solemn legal agreement , into which God voluntarily entered. The elaborate detail of Gen 15: 8-11, 17 has parallel in some of the text discovered in the ancient Near East.

In vs. 9 God demanded sacrificial offerings from Abram (three years old heifer, three years old female goat and three years old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon) which he brought to Him. Then in vs. 10 he cut the animals into two and arranged them opposite to each other but the birds were not cut into half. This ritual detail is in consonant with the tradition of the day. In Mari tablet it was discovered that an "Ass" was used as a covenant offering and the terminology used is "to slay an Ass" which means "to enter in to compact" (Mendenhall 1962:26) it is this prominence of the "Ass" in pagan cults that caused the Israelites to proscribe the custom in their own ritual practices (1962:27; Abe 1986: 2-11)

In vs.12 as the covenant offering was placed on the ground a deep sleep fell on Abram the kind that fell on Adam when Eve was to be made out of him. This sleep was from the Lord which suggests that everyone will have their own dark period, a period of test and trial even then at this period God is still in control of the situation. There are three things to be noted here:

1. Abraham descendants would be stranger in a foreign land,
2. They will be enslaved and
3. Oppressed for four hundred and thirty years

At the end of four hundred and thirty years the Lord will bring them back to the land that was flowing with milk and honey.

Vs. 17 rv<åa] vaeê dyPiäl;w> '!v[' rWNÝt; hNE“hiw> hy"+h' hj'Pl'[]w: ha'B'ê 'vm,V,'h; yhiÛy>w:

`hL,ae(h' ~yrliz"G>h; !yBeP rb;ê['

17. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces the word !v[' means “smoke or smoking fire pot” and the word vaeê dyPiäl;w> means “blazing torch or flaming touch” Which suggest that God appeared in his glory to make covenant with Abram. Spieser observed that when covenant is made between two parties during this period, both of them would walk between the cut pieces of the sacrificed animals. This was an acted oath, as if the people were saying may I be cut to pieces like these animals if I do not fulfill my part of the covenant (1964:112). But here God is the one entering into covenant with Abram as Barnabe Assohoto noted, when it comes to God there is no one who is an equal partner who can walk between the pieces with him. Instead a smoking brazier with a blazing touch appeared and passed between the pieces. This represented God entering into a covenant with the helpless Abram (2006:34)

^a[]r.z:l. rmo=ale tyrIâB. ~r'Pb.a;-ta, hw"±hy> tr;óK' aWh^ah; ~AYæB; 18

`tr'(P.-rh;n> ldoßG"h; rh"iN"h;-d[]; ~yIr;êc.mi rh:âN>mi taZOëh; #r,a'âh'-ta, 'yTit;'n"

18. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

The word tyrIâB tr;óK. “cut a covenant” in relation to the Lord means the Lord made covenant with Abram. Some scholars (Mendenhall and Noth) had suggested that the word has its root from the Akkadian source meaning “which appeared in the Mari description of the covenant as the slaying of an ass between X and Y thus an Akkadian proposition descriptive of the mutual character of the agreement would have become in Hebrew a technical term for the compact itself, Mari tablet is to kill an ass while Hebrew is to cut “between” (G. E. Mendenhall citing M. Noth, *Gesammelte Studies* 1957: 26)

On the day of the covenant God made promises with Abram, the details of which were given in vs. 18-19 which can be summarized as follows

1. A restatement of God’s commitment to give the land of the Canaanites to Abraham’s descendants
2. A statement about boundary expansion
3. A statement about the current occupants of the land

This verse shows the generosity of God to Abram by condescending to his level and entered into covenant with him. According to H. L. Ellison and D. F. Payne noted that, “this covenant was to prove, a reassurance and an inspiration to Israelites and Jews. The how and when of

the promise however are entirely within God's control as it is at once demonstrated in vs. 13-16" (1979:126).

COVENANT MAKING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The word covenant is used in many passages of the Old Testament. Its most common usage is mainly between God and his people Israel. There are three categories of covenant making in the Old Testament.

1. Covenant making between man and man or nation to nation
2. Covenant making between the strong and the weak
3. Covenant between God and man or God and his people

The idea of covenant in the Old Testament can be traced to God himself. Right from the beginning of the Genesis narratives one discovers that God is always the initiator of the covenant. He made covenant with people in order to establish a relationship of faithfulness and trustworthiness with them.

Murray notes that,

The one secret of man's happiness was to be a trustful surrender of his whole being to the working of God. The one thing God sought to waken in men by promise and threatening, by mercy and judgment was faith. Of the many devices of which God's patient and condescending grace made use to stir up and strengthen faith, one of the chief was the covenant (1965:4)

EARLY COVENANT

Hebrew bible abounds with examples of covenants making. The first occurrence of the word is found in Genesis 6:18 "But with you I will establish my covenant" here God entered into covenant with Noah when he was about to destroy the world with flood and Gen 9:11-13 God indeed established his covenant with Noah and the token for that covenant was a sign of the bow in the sky.

PARTRIACHAL COVENANT

In Genesis 15:18; 17:1-2 God made covenant with Abraham with strong emphasis on the promise. Two promises were made

1. Promise of multiplication of Abraham's offerings
2. Inheritance of the Promised Land.

The patriarchal covenant is thus mainly promissory. In this it is closely related to Davidic covenant and other covenant that existed already.

Fensham noted that

The author of Exodus although describing the forming of the new Sinaitic covenant still emphasizes the importance of the patriarchal covenant. With the breaking of Sinaitic Covenant the patriarchal covenant was still in force it is thus to be noted that Sinaitic covenant did not replace the patriarchal covenant but coexisted with it. (1992:241)

PARITY COVENANT

This is a covenant between two people of equal strength and power. The case of David and Jonathan was a typical example. Peterson noted that the covenant that exists between David and Jonathan was so strong that even death could not separate them. He noted that even though there is always a certain duplicity of motive in David's relation to the house of the King Saul, however, his (David) behavior bears testimony to the strength of the covenant. (Peterson 1926:292)

The covenant between Jacob and Laban is another example of Parity covenant. (Gen 31:44-52) This covenant involves oath taking and a eating of a meal prepared on the altar called heap of witness to seal the covenant. Both of them swore to an oath and attached it with a pronouncement on any of the party that will break the covenant.

SUZERAINTY COVENANT

This is a covenant that is usually made when one is defeated in war. It is a covenant that is forced on the captives by their captors. Or a covenant that a conqueror army made again the conquered army. 11 Sam. 11: 1-2 is an example when Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamp against Jabesh Gilead and all men of Jabesh said unto Nahash "Make covenant with us and we will serve you." This kind of covenant is common among the people of the Ancient Near East. Many examples can be found in Mari tablets and Nuzi texts. Other related terms used for covenants in the biblical texts include Oaths taking, Marriages vows, alliance, vows, pledges and promises of different kind. The Lord also make covenant of salt with his people as a mark of His commitment to the covenant. Salt is everlasting so the covenant made by God with His children is an everlasting one (*For detailed study on covenant see Johs Peterson, Israel: Its Life and Culture London: Oxford University Press, 1926) and Andrew Murray Two Covenants and the Second Blessing London: Oliphant Press, 1965*)

COVENANT IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The idea of making covenant pervades almost the whole history of the Ancient Near East. It is only by chance that one is well informed of the covenantal practices of the Ancient Near East. In recent times there are certain tablets that were discovered in Mari and Nuzi which shed light on the culture and practices of the people of the Near Eastern world.

MARI TABLETS

In the Mari tablet, it was discovered that a treaty background existed between various nations and groups of people in the area. Mendenhall described the treaty as between a father and son, Lord and servant. This shows that in a friendly relationship the great king is normally called the father and the vassal that is slave is the son and in more stern relationship the great king is normally called lord and his vassal servant.

AMARNA TABLETS

In Amarna texts there are two main categories of treaties that were discovered:

1. A treaty of equals in which the two parties are called brothers for example the treaties between Hattusilis 111 and Rameses 11. The stipulation of these kinds of treaties is restricted mainly to the acknowledgement of borders and the return of runaway slaves.

2. A vassal treaty was contracted between a great king and a minor king. These treaties were built up more or less around the following scheme:

A. Introduction or preamble: The great king introduced himself and his title

B. Historical prologue: The histories of his relationship with vassal's forefather are mentioned. The history is not stereotyped but actual historical occurrences which are described with strong emphasis on the benevolent deeds of the great king to the vassal and his country.

C. The stipulations of the treaties are given. Under these stipulations, according to Fensham there were some prohibitions under it, which the vassals must be careful to take note of or else they may be inviting curses upon themselves. Certain curses will come into effect when the curses are broken. This is similar to Yoruba traditional beliefs on covenant when a party breaks covenant then curses will set in which will have serious repercussion on the covenant breakers. The curses attached to breaking of covenant are diverse, some of the curses are reserved for the divine sphere and others could be executed by the army of the great king but when the treaty is kept certain blessings will accrue to the vassal.

COVENANTAL RITES IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Most of the tablets discovered through archeological expedition in the Middle-East example the Mari, Ugarit and Alalakh tablets gave little information on the covenantal rites attached to covenant making. However, on the material available the slaughtering of animals such as ass, donkey, sheep and bull are described. In this region, it was their custom to cut the animal into two or three parts and burnt the parts in honor of the gods and eat the other parts as covenantal meal or after cutting the animal into pieces both parties would walk between the cut pieces of the sacrificed animals (Assohoto 2006: 34). The parallel to this event was found in Genesis 15: 9-18 and Exodus 24 where the same rites were mentioned. In this case the sacrifice and the covenantal meals are clearly described (Fenshaw 240).

COVENANT MAKING IN YORUBA TRADITION.

Covenant making in Yoruba traditional belief forms an essential part of the public life of an average Yoruba people. Covenant and covenant making cut across the strata of all socio-religious life of the people (Mbiti 1969:24). The word *covenant* in Yoruba world view has different cognate words for example *majemu* means agreement or covenant; *imule* means covenant made with the land or mother earth who serves as witness *eni ba dale a bale lo* who ever breaks the covenant with the land or mother earth will die on the mother earth; *adehun* means bargaining, *ileri* means promise; *ibura* means an oath; and *eje* means vow or *pledge*. These are cognate word for *covenant* in Yoruba and their English version has similar meaning to those found in the bible.

In Yoruba cosmogony *majemu* is a strong agreement between two people or between a person or family with the deity or gods of the land. This can be done in different ways. It can be done by the use of kola nut, alligator pepper or sucking of each other's blood and then a pronouncement will follow that whoever breaks this covenant so and so will happen to him or her. (Arulefela 1988:20)

Imule is a form of covenant made between two parties and the mother earth is made to be a witness (*Ile abokoyeri, eni ba dale a bale lo*). Land is extended to everywhere and there is no person that will wake up in the morning that will not step on the ground that is why when

sacrifice is made it will be placed on the ground for the appeasement of witches and wizard before it can be accepted. *Imule* can be done by digging a hole in the ground, pouring water into it and putting some slices of kolanut in the water. The parties making the covenant kneel down and drink from the water. Then they eat one slice of the kola nut (20). This is similar to what Jacob and Laban did at Mizpah Gen 31:49-51. Covenant can be categorized into different types. These are:

1. Unknown Covenant (*majemu aimo*) these are covenants made on behalf of someone without the person knowing about it. For example, the parent can enter into a covenant on behalf of their children without the children knowing about it. Mrs. A told me that her mother enter into a covenant with the goddess of a river when she was looking for the fruit of the womb and when she got the baby she was made to re-dedicate the baby back to the goddess of the river if she wanted the baby to survive. (She did not want her name to be mentioned)

2. Blood Covenant This is a covenant that involves blood. In this covenant the parties are made to suck each other's blood and promise with an oath to uphold the covenant no matter what it costs. This is common among the cults. Abimbola gave a practical example of how the blood covenant is contracted. He said there are different types of blood covenant. There is one practice by the cultist, the first day of the meeting the leader will make new member to drink the blood of all old members of the cult with kolanut and make some evil pronouncement in case anyone breaks the covenant. Another one is the one that is common between a girl and a boy when they are in love. Both will drink each other's blood and seal it with sexual intercourse and put curses upon themselves if they break the relationship. Many girls and boys are involved in this kind of covenant which affects their future. (*Interview: Abimbola from Akure*).

3. Covenant Between two friends. An ordinary spoken agreement between two friends is a covenant. Arulefela narrated a story that a man gives some dust of earth to his friend and tells him that when he dies a son of his who does not care for him should not be allowed to take part in his funeral. If the man does not pleaded for the son and allows the young man to take part in the funeral he has broken the covenant. The penalty is death (1988:21). This incident happened in Ijebu Ode many years ago. A man solemnly warned his younger brother and his son that when he died his corpse should not be taken to the mortuary, when the man died; his brother and his son took him to the mortuary. On their way from the mortuary they died in a motor accident (1988:25)

4. Covenant with demons for power and protection. Some people made covenant with demons in order to acquire power and protection. Some made covenant with the dead etc. Chief Adebago explained how covenant is made with demons (*Anjoonu*). He said covenant is usually made when a town is seeking for protection and refuge from the demon or gods of the land, the king of the town together with the High priest will go into the bush at the midnight and consult with the demon and whatever the demons demanded as a token of the covenant has to be given. Covenant with the dead is usually made for money making enterprise. This is complex and cannot be covered in this paper.

5. Covenant between husband and wife. This is a covenant made between two people mostly a female and a male. For the sake of love they incised their body and suck each other's blood.

They may use kola nut to rub each other's blood and eat it. They must not betray each other. If they do they will die. Whatever they pronounce based on the covenant will come to pass. Some couples do enter into this covenant not knowing the implication of the pronouncement made by themselves on the day of their marriage.

6. There is also sexual covenant. This involved sexual intercourse in the cemetery. They use this covenant for making money. The lady that is engaged in sex will soon be afflicted and die. Or the covenant may be between a mad woman and a man looking for money. The covenant is usually completed with the man having a regular sex with the mad woman. The danger here is that if the woman became pregnant and bears the child, one of the legitimate children of the man will die.

7. Covenant made with communal meal. Arulefela in his interview with one Chief Olusada made us to know that people within a family or society could enter into a covenant by sharing a common meal. The meal is usually a potato and meat. Blood would be mixed into the food. A mat would be spread on the floor and all who wanted to enter into that covenant relationship would sit on the mat. The usual invitation to anyone who wanted to come into covenant relationship is *Eniti o ba to akon efon k' o wa yo iwo sariwa* meaning whoever is as strong as a male buffalo, let him stretch his horn. This type of covenant is for men only. Whoever sit on the mat or eat the meal must never betray the confidence of the party (Arulefela 1988: 24).

8. Covenant making among the elders. The elders usually bind themselves into a covenant relationship by sharing slices of kola nut. In Yoruba land kola nut is sacred and it is used in finding out the truth when a doubtful situation arises. It is used to worship the head and also to find out facts about the future. The kola nut that is commonly used is *kola acuminata* (three or more cotyledon) and not *kola nitida* (two cotyledons) Kola nut is used to pray for people or used to invoke the deity. The Yoruba believed that the divinity will not reject any request made to him through the kola nut. When the elders share kola nut together, the act becomes a covenant. When they want it binding they can add three seeds of alligator pepper to it. When things are not going on well among the elders the usual adage is that you elders who shared the pieces of kola nut together meet together as one. Alligator pepper makes the covenant transferable to offspring because alligator pepper stands for productivity in Yoruba tradition. (1988:25)

There are other covenants chief Adebago and Arulefela noted that is prominent among the Yoruba's these are: covenant making by using the implement of labor; covenant making among the kings and chiefs; covenant making in the Ogboni Society; covenant making before Ogun; covenant making before Oloke and covenant in the Ifa corpus (1988:24-34).

One thing that is common in all the covenants made in Yoruba land is the sharing of meal, even when other ingredients such as alligator pepper, water, bitter kola and kola nut are involved, a meal will definitely followed. By the time Christianity came to Yoruba land the idea of covenant or fellowship meal stopped among the Christian worshippers but the tradition still goes on among the traditional worshippers. Yemi Elebuibon and Ifa specialist attested to this fact in one of his interview on the Radio FM Ilesha 95.5 on Sunday recently that tradition will always be, no matter how other religions tried to destroy it.

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INTERVIEW

1. Mr Abimbola A Resident of Akure interview done on Saturday October 20, 2009 by 10am
2. Chief Olu Adebago, The Agbomola of Ila Orangun Interview done on Nov 10, 2009 by 2pm
3. Anonymous interview done at Ogbomosho Oct 27, 2009 by 7pm.

Received for Publication: 16/08/2011

Accepted for Publication: 04/10/2011

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